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ABSTRACT

WITH THE RAPID GROWTH IN TAX SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AT BOTH THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL DURING THE LAST 10 YEARS, THE PUBLIC AND LEGISLATORS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN GETTING SCME RETURNS FOR THEIR INVESTMENT. THE UNIVERSITY, LCNG ENGAGED IN BASIC AND APPLIED MILITARY RESEARCH, IS NOW BEING ASKED TO HELP SOLVE OUR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND SERVE AS THE AGENCY TO BRING ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE. THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSE IO THESE DEMANDS HAS BEEN CHARACTERISTICALLY ACADEMIC: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW DEGREE PROGRAM, OR INSTITUTE. A FEW OF THE FACULTY HAVE UNDERTAKEN LIMITED PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES. THE PUBLIC EXPECTS MORE; IT EXPECTS THE UNIVERSITY TO DEVELCP A SOCIAL TECHNCLOGY TO CVERCOME THE VEXING SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF OUR SOCIETY. THIS CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY CHANGING THE PRESENT FORM OF RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. APPLIED SOCIAL RESEARCH MAY REQUIRE DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND IDEALCGICAL CCMMITMENT, WHICH CCULD AROUSE STRONG LCCAL ANTAGONISMS AND LEAD TO CCNTROL OVER THE UNIVERSITY BY RADICAL GRCUPS OF THE LEFT OR RIGHT. THE ESTABLISHMENT CF INDEPENDENT PROBLEM-CENTERED INSTITUTES MAY BE A BETTER APPROACH TO TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF EFFECTING SOCIAL CHANGE. (AF)

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THE UNIVERSITY AND SOCIETY: ON BITING THE HAND THAT FEEDS US

Council of Graduate Schools, December 4, 1969

PSALM 11:3: If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Radical student and faculty critics characterize our universities as servants of the so-called military-industrial complex. They say that we are hypocritical because we pose as detached and objective in our search for knowledge while fully committed to the self interest of the white upper middle class establishment. In resisting their demands that the university as a whole take stands on current political issues, we argue that such action will polarize and politicize the university.

They reply that we have already politicized the university by accepting a role in society which is incompatible with our commitment to free inquiry and our posture of detachment. They say that we are responsible for the new knowledge we discover and the new objects we create, that we cannot be indifferent to the fact that new knowledge and new technology can be used for an indeterminate amount of good or an indeterminate amount of evil. Their accusations refer to our moral complacency before this ambiguity.

Without being judgmental and simply because it illustrates a point, consider the recent student demonstrations against defense research at one of our leading universities as reported in the New York Times and the Chronicle of Higher Education. According to the Times, this university has changed its policy towards defense research and is now seeking support for more socially useful projects. The Times quotes a dean partially responsible for the management of these research activities as follows:

> "The university has set as policy a deliberate movement from Department of Defense and space research to a different mix: more and more research relevant to societal problems--mass transit and environmental problems."

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> "It's going to take considerable time to make the transition, however, and if we are going to continue on the same scale of operations [here at the laboratories], we're going to need lots of time and new money."

The dean went on to say that while a lot of money is available for military research, relatively little is available to solve the problems of peacetime society. He said that Congress must change the emphasis, not the university.

Of course, I prefer to believe that the dean was misquoted, but if by chance he was not, his remarks suggest that the decision to undertake classified military research was based on the availability of money, more than on the university viewed as a center for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge. If this is a criticism of one university, it is also a criticism of every university in the country. I am willing to wager that few days go by without the graduate dean or the vice-president for research having to distinguish between an opportunity for the university and opportunism prompted by some special circumstance. Obviously, wrong choices have been made more than once and in more than one university.

One further quotation from the New York Times is of interest. Graduate research assistants work on defense related research in the university referred to above. One of these students was quoted as follows:

> "What I'm designing may one day be used to kill millions of people--I don't care. That's not my responsibility. I'm given an interesting technological problem, and I get enjoyment out of solving it."

Again, one hopes he was misquoted. If not, however, his view provides substance for the radical indictment of our universities and suggests that this indictment contains truth which we neglect at our peril.

Another problem associated with Defense related research has now risen with the passage of the Mansfield amendment to the recently approved military procurement bill. Senator Mansfield and Congressman Mendel Rivers had

different motives in supporting this amendment, but they agreed that its effect would be desirable, again, for different reasons. The amendment bans the award of funds to any project or study unless it has "a direct and apparent relationship to a specific military function or operation."[1]

How flexible the Department of Defense will be in respect to this amendment is not clear. My guess is that the amendment will receive a liberal interpretation. In one way or another, basic research will continue to receive support. The burden will be on the DOD agency and not on the university to show the relationship of the project to a specific military function. Quite obviously, a rigid enforcement of this law will create problems for many universities.

The most interesting aspect of the Mansfield amendment, however, is its easy acceptance by the members of Congress. The mood of Congress and the public has changed. The effects of this change will be felt not only in the support of research by the Department of Defense, but in other agencies as well. Congress and the public, beset by the problems of international and domestic crisis, want something for their money.

This change in mood is not surprising. State legislatures have increased tax support for higher education from 1.3 billion in 1959 to 6.1 billion in 1969, an increase of 337%. This growth in support, whether adequate or not, added to the staggering federal investment gives the public an interest in higher education and its products. In Congress and among people generally a large part of the animus against protesting students rises from the universal feeling that those who pay the piper should call the tune. Taxpayers and legislators have always expected the university to serve society. In modern times they have turned to the university for solutions to our acute social and environmental problems. In the face of these demands, universities will

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[1]Higher Education and National Affairs, Vol XVIII, No. 40, p. 2, November 14, 1969

find a new test of their independence and integrity. To fulfill our commitment to the unbiased search for truth, we must always be in a position, when necessary, to bite the hand that feeds us. Recent developments suggest that we may find this increasingly difficult to do.

In 1968 the Committee on Research and Research Administration of the Association of Graduate Schools said:

> "...perplexing problems face our local and federal governments. It is not unnatural that the public turns to the universities for solutions. People expect help in part because they feel that university research and training should have relevance to the current needs of society and...because they feel that there should be some tangible results from...an increasingly massive federal investment in higher education."[1]

These sentiments reflect the opinions of many government officials who have expressed the belief that universities must assist government in solving the major problems of our society. Oddly enough, this is one point on which members of the establishment and radical students agree. To those responsible for the operation of university research, it often appears that both the federal government and student radicals are telling us that after certain adjustments, which they will prescribe, the university will be the appropriate agency to bring about social change.

Although social science has made enormous strides, and although universities have organized interdisciplinary research institutes and other sophisticated collections of social scientists, our approach to social problems remains characteristically academic. The immediate university response to any crisis is to appoint a committee which, in turn, establishes a new degree program. In addition, social scientists have organized bureaus of community service, centers for action research, departments of urban affairs, behavioral science

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[1]Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Association of Graduate Schools in the Association of American Universities, 1968, page 101-2.

research institutes, and similar agencies within the university. While the debate on the extent to which the university should respond to the demands of society goes on, significant portions of the community already engage in direct-action programs. We find social scientists as consultants and evaluators in the planning of various Federally and locally sponsored urban programs. Campus agencies conduct training programs for social counselors, city administrators, etc. Some of this work is supported by Federal agencies. In principle, this activity is justified by the expertise of our faculty and the university's responsibility to provide public service. It does not entail much new research and most action oriented groups of faculty are not concerned with academic training of graduate students. On the whole, these activities are conducted in keeping with our conventional model of the public or semi-public institution serving many needs while maintaining a measure of detachment from the political process.

Neither new degree programs nor limited public service activities are bad strategy. Degree programs provide people trained to deal with social problems, and the role of university professors as consultants and evaluators has long been established. The question which interests me, however, is whether an extension of this activity and further basic social science research is really all that is expected, or whether Congress and the tax payers expect something more. There is some evidence that the public expects more.

At least one consideration in the mind of Congress and the public is the fact that universitites have made enormous contributions in agricultural science and technology, in medical science and technology, in engineering, and in physics. Most recently, the universities have supplied a portion of the basic science and manpower in the space program. The public assumes that universities can supply comparable technology to overcome our vexing social problems.

If such a social technology is not now available, it is assumed that it will be shortly after an appropriate infusion of Federal funds. Are these assumptions likely to be true?

In August 1969, the National Science Foundation released a report by the Special Commission on the Social Sciences recommending the creation of a number of social problem research institutes, each devoted to a particular problem area. The Commission recommended that the National Science Foundation allocate 10 million dollars for the interdisciplinary centers in 1970 and expressed the hope that twenty or so could be established nation-wide in the near future. These institutes would consist of social scientists and specialists from other disciplines and professions. They would produce the relevant data for their clients, government or other organizations facing particular social problems, and would expect to work closely with them.

In October 1969, the National Academy of Sciences and the Social Science Research Council released a report recommending the establishment of a new kind of graduate school specializing in applied behaviorial research.[1]

Meanwhile, the National Science Foundation budget for Fiscal 1970 contains a 10 million dollar item to begin a program of inter-disciplinary research relevant to the problems of society. This program would provide funds for starting multi-disciplinary social research efforts on university campuses. Whether one program or another is adopted, it seems clear that more of the conventional, piece-meal social research now conducted in universities is not what is wanted.

The Special Commission on the Social Sciences reported that "The present organization of Social Science Research is not well oriented to attacks on national social issues." If a program of basic research, training, consultation, and evaluation is to be effective on a national scale, vast sums of

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[1]The Behavioral and Social Sciences: Outlook and Needs, Prentice Hall, N.Y., 1969

(Draft-7)

money will be required. Whether the work is to be done by independent institutes or within university agencies, a major portion of the staff will presumably come from universities. Current research and graduate training may be affected either by reallocation of university resources and priorities or by removal of currently available faculty from the university campus. A program designed to make social science immediately applicable to current social problems invites universities to change the present form of research in the social sciences and to change the purposes of the graduate training connected with that research. We may find that we are being invited to change the purposes of the university as well. Perhaps this would be a good thing, but it is prudent to consider what such changes might entail.

I suppose I am worried about the implications for the university in the notion of <u>applied social science</u>. To what extent should universities undertake activities supported by federal and local government which require direct involvement in the political process?

The expectation that universities can participate directly in the political process in ways similar to the way they participate in the development of agriculture, space or medical technology, ignores political realities at both the local and federal levels. The question has to be faced--whose social technology and for whose welfare shall it be applied? This is a political question and requires a political answer. There is very little about current social science which leads me to believe that it can provide acceptable political answers.

In the ghetto, for example, the sophisticated, abstract research of the social scientist is poorly understood by those he hopes to serve. To poor people, he looks like another agent of the oppressive establishment. They have been surveyed and studied before and nothing changed. They fear that

data the scientist gathers will be used against them rather than on their behalf. Because of their continuing conflicts with police and other government agencies, they suspect that the researcher may be attempting to invade their privacy, or what little they have. They see no reason to evaluate programs which they already know to be inadequate. They see social research as an excuse to delay the changes they desire. They see no need for further studies which report that Negroes in the ghetto are not able "to participate in the normal choice of housing".[1] If they could express it, they might say that it may take an economist to recognize the connection between disposable income and environmental pollution but any ghetto inhabitant can recognize the inadequacies of the municipal garbage collection agency.

The behavioral scientist's investigations also threaten the interests of local and federal government agencies. Consider the likely response of the welfare or police departments to criticism and proposals for change from university investigators. It is not difficult to imagine how class and racial antagonisms and the resistance by vested interests at all levels would thwart the attempt by university agencies to participate directly in the political process.

Political engagement requires ideological commitment. American universities have "sanitized" their ideological commitments under the rubrics of "public service" or "service in the interests of national security" or some similar device. These rubrics may no longer satisfy the public who support the universities when our activities in applied social science adversely affect their economic and social interests. If the university as a whole or some significant fraction of it engages directly in the political process in order to effect social changes, no matter how desirable, the opportunity will

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[1] James Kalish, "Flim Flam, Doubletalk, and Hustle: The Urban Problems Industry" Washington Monthly, Vol. 1, No. 10, 1968, p. 10.

be open for control of the university by the radical left or radical right. I am sure that you have noticed that while the university may have some power of moral persuasion, it has virtually no political power. This is why it is so easy to rape Alma Mater, that poor defenseless old crone. Anyone can attack her with impunity, a fact which politicians and student bullies know very well.

These thoughts suggest that universities should exercise extraordinary care in undertaking research in applied social science. The question "Is this project appropriate for the university to undertake?" should be weighed carefully by the research administrator for it is possible that some activities could have disastrous political consequences for the university. These thoughts also suggest that the recommendation of the Special Commission on the Social Sciences to establish independent, problem centered, research institutes may have merit. At any rate, such institutes would be independent of universities, their purposes could be limited, and their political relationships clearly identified. This approach seems more feasible than an effort to tack applied social research on to existing university programs. It is probably true that the establishment of such institutes would draw some faculty away from the universities, but this would be a temporary problem. In the meantime, the establishment of institutes would not prevent the National Science Foundation from going forward with a program to develop multidisciplinary research groups on university campuses or universities themselves from establishing graduate schools of applied behavioral science. We could expect considerable interaction between such university groups and the independent institutes. Indeed, this device may be the means to "sanitize" and promote more direct university involvement in the process of social change than would otherwise be possible.

Of course, my worries may be extravagant or misplaced or both. For better or worse, universities are changing and none of my concerns may be relevant. There is also the rather good possibility that Congress will not

be persuaded, as it has not been so far, that university social scientists can provide the answers we need. I suspect, rather darkly, that the social scientists themselves are really the only ones who think they can. In any case, someone--somewhere--must offer solutions to our problems. Despite the dangers, in one way or another, universities will have to try.